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ABSTRACT

This document reports on a study of the training needs that result from actual or impending corporate takeovers, based on needs assessments at three corporations conducted by students as part of a university class over a period of 10 weeks. The first section describes the study's background and methodology. The qualitative research methodology used in the needs assessments involved framing the problem, gathering data, interpreting it, restating the problem, and cycling through the other processes again to improve reliability and validity. This recycling process occurred several times in each needs assessment. Follow-up interviews were conducted with training personnel in the firms in which the needs assessments initially took place. The second section describes the purposes of the document, which include reporting on changes in the training staff and financial resources provided, newly assigned training goals, and the perspective toward the takeover of those who are directing the training effort. Section 3 describes incidents associated with unwanted and friendly threatened takeovers and addresses possible implications and questions raised. Section 4 deals with the period of adjustment after the takeover, highlighting changes in function, changes in scope and focus, changes in performance standards, potential problems, and changes in corporate culture. Section 5 explores decisions to be made by the trainer, including whether to act or react. Section 6 poses continuing research questions. Section 7 is a short conclusion. (CML)

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# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTER

Project Number Thirty-Three

## CORPORATE TAKEOVERS: ASSESSMENT OF RESULTING TRAINING NEEDS

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Corporate takeovers have become frequent occurrences in United States business organizations. The language used to describe them--friendly or hostile--may (a) suggest some things about the general conditions of takeovers, (b) reveal the stance of the organization that is the object of the takeover, and (c) express the attitudes of many of the organization's members toward the event.

Before, during, and for a period of time after the takeover, rumors are popular and fears and apprehensions are common. The productivity level of the organization is affected as the efforts of many are turned toward personal and unusual work goals. Although outward signs may give the appearance that things are normal, the state within the organization is often chaotic. Usual practices may be disrupted and the number of jobs and job responsibilities may be changing.

In spite of all these problems, however, this atmosphere can become an opportunity for trainers who are aware of the possibilities that may exist.

## Background and Methodology

This report is written from the perspective of a corporation that is the target of a takeover. It is based on information gathered during the course of needs assessments in three corporations in which takeovers either had occurred recently or were thought to be likely. Each of the needs assessments was conducted by students as part of a university class under the direction of the author over a period of ten weeks.

One of the corporations, a manufacturer of recreational and industrial power supplies, had recently been purchased by a former competitor. This resulted in a merger of the two products lines and

distribution systems. The needs assessment in this firm was conducted for the distributor training center, which had responsibility for the technical training of the staffs of independent distributors and dealers of the product line.

The second corporation, a manufacturer of personal care products, had been the object of takeover attempts by other corporations with similar products. Each of these attempts was resisted by the redistribution of significant corporate resources.

The third corporation was engaged in the manufacture of computers and component parts. In this case, a needs assessment was conducted in a wholly owned subsidiary. Because of financial problems in the parent firm, the subsidiary was viewed by stock analysts as the likely object of a sale to provide capital for the owner corporation to satisfy its lenders and to maintain its product development.

In one firm, there were five needs assessments in a period of six years. In another, two needs assessments were completed in two years. In the third corporation, there was one needs assessment. Systematic observations and questioning by students and the author were a part of all the needs assessments.

Although these data gathering processes primarily were aimed at producing training recommendations and supporting interventions, takeover prospects were an evident part of the needs assessment context and were carefully documented and frequently discussed. In one needs assessment, the team was asked specifically to recommend a strategy for training in a takeover atmosphere. In all cases, the prospect or reality of a takeover was not secret, was openly discussed by assessors and company personnel, and was an important

consideration in interpreting information received and recommendations made.

Needs assessment, as practiced here, is a form of qualitative research. The methodology of framing the problem, gathering data, interpreting it, restating the problem, and cycling through the other processes again to improve reliability and validity was consciously drawn from qualitative research. This recycling process occurred several times in each needs assessment, as one stage of the investigation opened up new questions or presented an old question in a different way.

This same methodology was also used in the study of the effect of corporate takeovers on training needs. Pertinent data from several needs assessments were combined to focus on the takeover issue. Also, as part of the recyclying process, follow-up interviews were conducted with training personnel in the firms in which the needs assessments initially took place.

## Purpose

The purpose of this report, based on these three corporations, is to describe the patterns that emerged with direct effects on training units and trainers as a result of takeovers and reports of takeovers. This includes changes in (a) the training staff and financial resources provided, (b) newly assigned training goals, and (c) the perspective toward the takeover of those who are directing the training effort.

The report is divided into three major sections. The first section focuses on incidents associated with a threatened takeover, the second deals with the period of adjustment after the takeover, and the third explores decisions to be made by the trainer.

## Before the Takeover

A takeover does not have to occur to have an effect on the object corporation. The impact of a threatened takeover is enough to set many reactions in motion, which will, in turn, have a direct or indirect impact on training functions. In response to suspected takeover attempts, organizations may change their operations and individuals may behave differently in their work responsibilities and personal conduct.

The capacity of a firm to provide training and the readiness of employees to receive training may be changed. Training professionals may be among those affected by takeover talk; instincts to protect themselves and the organization may squeeze out more routine job behavior. Whether a takeover is considered to be hostile or friendly, the impending transition will be menacing to many and there will be a great range of responses. This section includes examples and discussion of the effects of threatened takeovers on organizations studied and possible implications for training.

### Unwanted Takeover

One of the direct effects of an unwanted takeover attempt may be the use of the corporation's resources to prevent that action. This would include capital that might be used to buy back company stock.

In one corporation rumored to be the object of several takeover attempts, operating funds were reduced in every feasible corporate function to enable the purchase of more of the corporation's stock. This included reducing the training budget. Over a period of five or six years, the cycle of reductions was repeated each time another corporation attempted a takeover.

The unsuccessful takeover campaigns became one of the more demoralizing aspects of work in the corporation with a build-up of stress resulting from reduced resources and the uncertainty of continuity. Training plans often underwent forced revision as the amount of money provided was reduced. It became nearly impossible to do such things as contract for training services because of the uncertainty of available money for purchase.

Training personnel gained the feeling that they were always planning and had little sense of success or of making a contribution. They were often asked to replan under more difficult conditions and they became more conservative in what they were willing to try. Within the annual corporate planning cycle, the goals proposed by trainers became more immediate as a means of protecting them from disruption.

Though the corporation wanted to maintain a training function, there was a message that, under the present circumstances, training was not as important as it used to be nor as important as most other corporate functions. Had it not been for such corporate obligations as safety training, the training function would have become insignificant.

Friendly Takeover

In another firm, in which a friendly takeover was thought to be pending, there was a loss of executive attention paid to the internal affairs of the company. In this case, the parent company needed to raise cash to support product development and to satisfy lenders in regard to the financial stability of the organization. Top managers were given assignments that were intended to improve outward

appearances and enhance the market value of the wholly owned subsidiary.

The business affairs of competing companies, which now were potential buyers, were watched carefully for hints about their intentions and interests. There was a sense of ritualistic dance, as when a suitor tries to attract a mate. This was interesting drama, which attracted the attention of most employees in the firm and undercut productivity.

Although there was a newly reorganized training unit, it was difficult to define its role and to get direction from those who had responsibility for corporate planning. Those in training seemed to be paralyzed by the turmoil around them and did not act to take control of their own affairs. To do something that might contribute to productivity required taking some chances and those with training responsibilities considered it less risky to do little so fewer mistakes would be made.

Corporate management was not sending messages that could be interpreted as support for training and it was unlikely that notice would be taken of training results because so much attention was turned toward the outside.

Possible Implications and Questions Raised

In such circumstances, those who make the major executive decisions for a company may expect that those who report to them will maintain a stable business atmosphere. However, this seems difficult. Those who have assumed operational leadership are just as interested as those above them in what is going on and they are trying

to direct employees who also have concerns about their personal and employment futures.

Much time may be consumed by the discussion of rumors, and individuals with key skills may begin to leave the organization. This may put some people in positions that are new and unfamiliar to them and disrupt the flow of work to which others have become accustomed. There may be a temptation for exempt employees to copy materials in the files that might be useful should it become necessary to find a position in another firm. As these and other self-protective acts are carried out, the productivity of the unit will be eroded.

When takeover talk persists, everyone in the target organization seems to understand that things are not right, in spite of contrary statements that may be made to ease the insecurities of employees. This leads to a deterioration of morale. The meanings of morale that apply in these cases are those that refer to the group's sense of common purpose and the individual's state of well-being based on a sense of purpose and confidence in the future.

Competition among individuals may increase together with secretiveness of ideas, to the detriment of cooperation and teamwork. As the future seems to be in the hands of someone else, there may be a loss of self-determination, ultimately leading to a defeatist attitude. It may become increasingly more difficult to focus on long-term organizational and individual work goals as survival becomes most important.

Training Problems and Opportunities

It may be easy for those with training responsibilities to become morose and to abandon their goals in such difficult situations. However, when a takeover is threatened, they should recognize that there are opportunities for training that may not be any more difficult to define than when expansion demands training.

In such circumstances, an assessment of needs is very logical. Preferably, it should begin with an organized, systematic assessment to identify the primary discrepancies between the present condition and the desired state of organizational performance. As long as a takeover has not happened, the organization should remain productive and keep its advantage in the market. In actuality, an attempted takeover may be seen as a compliment to some or all of the operation, products, services, and assets of the object company and this edge should not be allowed to slip away.

This viewpoint could be used as an incentive to convince those in the organization that they need to act, individually and as an organization, to improve the operation and increase the chances of survival. Any plan presented as a result of the needs assessment should acknowledge the present conditions and point to solutions that would make a positive difference. In addition to primary needs identified by a systematic needs assessment, trainers should also be alert to and assess continuing changes as new plans are implemented.

A needs assessment can provide a framework for performance improvement and a goal-oriented plan of action, but within that framework there is also a need to respond to more immediate objectives such as safety training. A responsible program of training

should be directional and designed to contribute to the productivity of the organization even though there might be major changes occurring in the company. In most cases, training objectives with a shorter time frame are more responsive to present conditions and can contribute to the accomplishment of organizational goals, unless those goals have become irrelevant as a result of new business objectives. Even though there may be turmoil in the organization, there is merit in demonstrating that the training is based on durable goals and is responsive to present conditions.

Based on real needs. In one of the rumored takeovers, the training department was becalmed by circumstances and wanted to get on the move again. The decision was made to initiate a training program that would not be disruptive but would draw the support of managers. As a result, a program of English as a second language was organized for the large Southeast Asian production force, although a recent needs assessment had found the language barrier to be unrelated to organizational productivity.

The program, supported financially by operations managers, was advertised for off-work hours. Company insiders and trainers considered the program a good thing to do because it could be relatively cost-effective, would be on employee time, and would not directly change any production procedure. At the same time it had the potential effects of involving large numbers of workers, building a base for other training, and giving the outward appearance of being a significant training activity. However, the Southeast Asian workers failed to see that it would benefit them sufficiently in their work or

personal lives to warrant the investment of their time. None of them enrolled.

Motivational. Factors that influence organizational effectiveness should be noted, with the intention to act on those that could improve productivity. When a takeover is threatened, many of the short-term factors will be motivational. There may be few ways of changing incentives and a limited number of training solutions to improve motivation under takeover conditions. However, it is possible to recommend changes that could make training more effective.

One example would be training supervisors to identify and deal with deteriorating job performance, which includes recognition for accomplishments and disciplinary action for disruptions that reduce productivity. Another example would be training sessions to inform workers, supervisors, and managers of the consequences to individuals and the organization of both improved and poorer output.

Simple and quick. When individuals with key skills leave the corporation, as happens with the possibility of a takeover, trainers should watch for untrained successors and a decline in organizational performance. Reviving old training plans, together with job aids and coaching, may serve to address the problem quickly. The immediacy of the problem is not likely to allow for development of elaborate training plans and materials. In fact, solutions that may seem less than ideal to the trainer in less stressful times should find their way back into the activities of the trainer at these times.

Taking greater risks is preferable to withdrawing. Acting and making some mistakes is actually more desirable than becoming more conservative, extending the study of the situation, and losing valuable

time. Under such pressurized situations, working with managers to bring people into jobs with new responsibilties can be rewarding for the trainer in both the short and long run. Building an image of being reponsive to real needs and acting with "controlled panic" can strengthen the position of a training unit or an individual trainer.

Responsive. A trainer might see other opportunities or problems for training in rumored takeover situations. For example, in one firm, increased absenteeism--leading to quickly shifting demands for product varieties with too few people to perform the jobs--resulted in an opportunity for cross-training to prepare workers for more than one job.

In another firm the changes led to more problems. The departure of some workers, together with the need to increase production, resulted in the hiring of temporaries into jobs thought to require little or no training. Many of the temporaries turned out to be less effective than expected and needed training. However, some of the expert information sources, upon whom the trainer had relied previously for validity checks in assessing needs and developing training materials, had left or detached from their jobs.

Another possible negative effect of a threatened takeover might be less careful attention to procedures such as record-keeping and documentation. In one organization, production workers filled out the data sheets needed for statistical process control during the last five minutes of each shift without objection from their supervisors. The need to train for how or why to perform procedures correctly becomes evident in such a situation. Other forms of organizational slippage call for similar attention.

As the trainer attends to these problems, there will be some opportunities to communicate that such crisis-oriented training fits within a larger plan and the trainer is not perceived as merely running from hydrant to hydrant trying to extinguish spontaneous blazes.

Strategic. In addition to all of the above-mentioned activity, there is also the likelihood of a smaller budget, less time, and other reduced resources for training. This calls for careful strategic planning, with training as one function for the accomplishment of corporate goals; this will also point to the importance of a needs assessment to provide direction for training and training-related solutions to productivity problems.

Those nonessential things that would be nice to do should have less chance of surviving. Long-term projects with abstract outcomes would not enhance the reputation of the trainer now, if they ever did. Expensive training plans, even if they could produce benefits in excess of their costs, would not be attractive. The focus will be on training that is most likely to produce the greatest return within the shortest amount of time in proportion to the cost. This is one of those times when the call for training to improve the productivity of the organization is urgent!

Realistic. Though there is no shortage of important training functions to be performed, trainers should set realistic expectations for themselves. It is difficult to complete an honest appraisal of what can be accomplished because it is hard to be objective in such situations. Trainers often consider that they have too much to do and think that the quality of their work would improve if they were given more time. As true as this statement might sound, there is merit in

being pushed by a schedule that does not allow as much time as might be desired for each task. With the ego involvement of the trainer in the projects that have been planned, there is a temptation to try to absorb every reduction in budget by putting in longer hours to save every training project. An option is to do as thorough a job as possible of estimating the resources critical for a project without cutting out the integrity of the program.

## After the Takeover

Although the completion of a takeover will affect both/all the firms involved, there usually will be more changes in the company that was purchased than in the buying corporation. Even in mergers in which the new partners are considered equals, one is likely to dominate. In a takeover, the power is with the buying company and the preferences of that organization will probably prevail when there is a dispute.

For the trainer in the corporation that has been acquired, an orientation to the ways of the new owners is required. There will be concrete as well as abstract differences from previous practices, all of which should be observed. Assume that there are reasons for the presence of each corporate characteristic that influences training. This includes the organizational provision for training, the expectations for training, and the culture of the organization.

## Change in Function

One of the most visible evidences of where training fits in an organization is provided by the organizational structure. A manufacturing firm that has training within its quality assurance unit is probably indicating the purpose that it expects training to fulfill. This

is not a judgment on the status of training, but a statement about its function. If quality assurance is central in a corporation's strategy for production and sales, location in the quality unit could be a distinction for training.

Although the accomodation for training in an organization may be easy to observe, the meaning of what is seen may be difficult to interpret. Even when a training unit remains intact following a takeover, shifts in the organization above it can reflect a changed training role. To understand this a trainer needs to gather the information that is available, form a hypothesis about its meaning, and continue to test this hypothesis by inquiry and further observation. The chances for success of a training unit in a new organization can be enhanced by developing a thorough understanding of the purposes assigned to training.

The place of training in corporate strategic planning will be an important indicator of the role of training. When training is expected to show how it contributes to the overall plan for the profitability of the corporation, it has the opportunity to demonstrate its importance. Training that is conducted without the awareness of its potential to contribute to productivity may be seen as an overhead item with little or no expectation of producing a return on investment. At the time of a takeover, it is especially important to make these observations as an assessment of the purpose of training in the newly formed firm is made. Those who are involved in training should understand how training fits into the plans of their employing corporation and initiate proposals that communicate how training can contribute to the accomplishment of corporate goals.

Change in Scope and Focus

The scope and focus of training can be changed as a result of a corporate takeover. Aside from the message provided by the place of training on the organization chart, there can be a direct assignment given to the training unit that is significantly different from what it has been in the past. The scope of training operations can be enlarged to include responsibility for a greater variety of objectives. In one case, a training unit was given the added assignment of producing videotapes for use in selling the company's products. This was received as an indication that the purpose of training was misunderstood and confused with sales. It also indicated the reduced importance of service in the corporation, of which training was a part, as compared with sales.

In another case, training that had included production workers and maintenance was reduced by eliminating the training of the maintenance mechanics. Unfortunately, the productivity of the workers on the line was directly tied to the ability of the maintenance mechanics to keep the line operating at peak efficiency, something that would become increasingly more difficult as the mechanics received no formal training.

Situations like these will not continue without resolution. A trainer can accept the change in assignment and focus on the training of production workers as though the training of maintenance mechanics will be provided for in some other way. This in fact will probably happen. If training is necessary, those who need it will find some way to get it or they will change the functions that they perform.

In any case, the approach to the training of production workers will be altered by the knowledge of the lower level of support provided for the maintenance mechanics, but the trainer still has an opportunity to focus effort in a way not possible before. To produce evidence that formal training should be provided for the maintenance mechanics would require an extensive amount of energy because of the elusiveness of the connection between mechanic training and organizational productivity. Instead, the trainer is in a position to focus on assessing the needs of production workers for training and to implement solutions that will avoid diminishing the outcomes of training because of reduced backup from maintenance mechanics.

Change in Performance Standards

With a corporate takeover there may be new standards of performance. This does not mean that the new standards are better or worse, but that they are different. The trainer needs to understand why the standards are different from what they were before. The supervisors will also need to understand why the standards are different and the workers will need to understand how the standards are to be attained. In the case of a takeover in one manufacturing firm, the product line was merged with a formerly competing product of the buying company. The standards of production were changed for the products of the purchased company to make them consistent throughout the entire new product line.

Potential Problems

Trainers should also be alert to the potential problems arising from the merger of operations. Undoubtedly, there will be different ways of doing the same thing in two different companies but, when a

takeover occurs, the two systems have to work as one. It may seem most logical to use one system or the other but the nature of the new organization may preclude that alternative.

In one takeover, the distribution systems of two organizations were merged. This usually means that the distributors of the buying company take over the business of the distributors of the company that was bought. However, in this case there was a superior training system for distributors and dealers to support the warranties of the company that was bought. As many of the distributors with trained mechanics were squeezed out by the takeover, the capacity to perform warranty service was diminished. The system of the buying corporation was inadequate for this phase of the business and an intensive effort to install the system of the purchased company for warranty service was undertaken.

Change in Culture

A probable change resulting from a takeover is the influence on the organizational culture by the purchasing corporation. One part of the culture of a corporation is its beliefs about how it makes a profit. In one case, an organization may believe that it makes a profit by providing the best warranty on its products, backed by a distributor and service system. Another manufacturer may tie its profitability to creating new products desired by its customers and placing them on the market more quickly than its competitors. These beliefs about how the organization makes a profit influence priorities and affect behaviors. They ultimately influence training. If a trainer has been accustomed to providing a logic for training based on cultural values,

that logic has to change when the culture changes, if it is to be successful.

A corporate culture is also described by the mores of responsibility toward company employees and toward the public. These mores are integrally related to ideas of how the company makes a profit but they can be separated out. In one instance, a company committed itself to retaining its workforce while going through an equipment modernization. However, the buyer of the company did not have this same value about retaining long-time employees and, by its practices, voided the understanding that had been held.

The corporate image of being a responsible community member can be altered in the process of a takeover. A corporation with locally based ownership and management had a program of benevolent participation in the community, to which a percentage of profits were dedicated. The new owner dropped this activity and, perhaps coincidentally, dropped a literacy training program within the company even though it had been justified as a base for learning job-specific skills.

As the culture of the new organization is formed out of the cultures of the purchasing company and the company that was purchased, individuals will begin to respond to it. If they perceive that the new culture has changed the system of rewards from what it was before, they will probably do those things that will be recognized in the new system, as they interpret it. For the trainer this means continuing to study the incentives in the organization and the motivations of those who work there.

In one corporation there was a shift in emphasis from the quality of product to the quantity of items produced. Although the stated company policy continued to be one of quality, production quotas and supervisory practices sent a different message to increase quantity at the cost of quality. The message that came through this communication conflict was the one sent by the actions, to the dismay of the management. The trainers, through a needs assessment, documented this problem and recommended training and supportive nontraining solutions.

## Takeover Training Decisions

The period before, during, and after a takeover is one of perceived and real instability. Although everyone in an organization is affected, there are some unusual situations for the trainer. Trainers are often involved across many units of an organization, so there are multiple influences on them. They also have a degree of independence in determining their work that is unlike that of many others at their level. Because of these factors there are decisions trainers must make about the direction and timing of their efforts.

### Act or React?

Most basically, there is a need to decide whether to act or react. To act means to plan a course based on the best organizational information available, following training practices that have been successful before. When a wait-and-see-what-happens posture is taken, those in training are in a position of reacting and have lost some control of their own future. Though caution may be the wisest course in some instances, there are several advantages to be gained by initiating planned action.

Start with needs assessment. A logical place to start is with a needs assessment. This needs assessment should be within the budget that is provided for training and should not be so expensive that it leaves no support for conducting the training solutions identified. Therefore, the needs assessment should be sized to fit the budget available. This may mean narrowing the scope of the assessment to those concerns that are judged to be most likely to yield problems with training solutions. This does not describe a model needs assessment because there may be a disposition toward finding particular training needs based on the decision about what needs assessment to conduct. But, it can be the right needs assessment for the conditions, especially if needs assessors pay attention to their own biases and inclinations to want to find a certain set of solutions.

The needs assessment can take advantage of the types of resources that are available. For example, the printing budget may be tight and not allow for a questionnaire but the commitments of trainer time may permit the use of interviews for data gathering. A needs assessment will provide for the systematic identification of organizational performance problems and propositions to solve them, which can provide evidence to those concerned that the training function of the organization has not been disabled by the turmoil associated with the takeover.

New needs. Although most people in a corporation do not think of a takeover as a time of opportunity, it can be for the trainer. Many of the conditions of the past will no longer exist and there will be many new arrangements that will require training. Job responsibilities will be changed and the systems that hold the

organization together will be different. Some incentives will not be the same and the motivation of individuals will change. All of these are conditions that should alert the trainer to potential problems that have training solutions.

The clearest cases for training are those in which workers do not have the skills and abilities for new job functions. Some form of training will be needed and formal training will usually be the most efficient means of raising the performance level of those who need training. If equipment and systems are introduced with new expectations for productivity, training will be needed. As rewards for performance are changed, supervisors will need to be informed of these and the workforce will need to know the consequences of their actions.

New environmental issues. As environmental conditions that will have a negative effect on training results are recognized, proposals to alter them should be made. If workers are expected to perform in a different way but they are rewarded for their old behavior, an environmental change is needed. The quality-quantity conflict described earlier illustrates this point in that management's verbal message stressed quality whereas the performance rewards were for quantity.

If needed equipment and procedures are missing, it may be impossible to meet new goals. Although this is an environmental issue, there may be an expectation that training should solve it. The distinction between the effects of training and environmental changes need to be made by the trainer. Even though managers may have understood this difference in the past, the presence of new managers

or pressures from the new owners can invalidate previous understandings.

## Continuing Research Questions

This report has been based on events associated with takeovers in three corporations. It describes conditions that may be identified in other situations, but, as a study of three cases, it will not pass the test of generalizability. Any principles to be derived about training needs assessments in corporate takeovers require the support of more research in takeover settings. One of the functions of this report is to provide suggestions for additional research that will inform trainers, trainers of trainers, managers, researchers, and others in the field.

One area of research interest is understanding trainee barriers to learning before, during, and after a takeover. Factors that are identified by trainees as obstacles to their learning should be documented, including emotional, environmental, and other conditions. It would be beneficial to know whether these factors are the same before and after a takeover.

There may be major changes in incentives that result from this transition. The functioning of incentives in motivating individuals in the work setting is not well understood. This issue is complicated by conditions of a takeover. For some, it appears that their incentives are no longer in the workplace. As incentives are directly linked to motivation and motivation is essential for successful training, research should be aimed at identifying incentives and how they shift during takeovers.

Additional research should focus on the nature of leadership in a corporation involved in a takeover. It would be helpful to training

personnel to know the leadership functions that are given highest priority and those that are most likely to be neglected. Training needs may be altered by leadership emphasis and voids. The managers who are the functional clients of training needs assessments within an organization may be changed by leadership shifts. Coupled with this research interest is a question about the rate of change in the leadership priorities and actions of managers and executives. These may move too rapidly for rational trainer responses.

The benefits produced by training in the merger of two corporations would profit from further study. For example, what is the return from training focused on the warranty service delivery system before that system is installed in a newly merged corporation? The same question can be applied to any other system affected by a takeover, including inventory, management information, accounting, billing, and service delivery.

There are segments of most needs assessments that are dependent on expert information sources. Some of these sources usually exist within the corporation where the needs assessment is being conducted. This presents a problem when key individuals in the organization leave their positions and alternate sources of reliable information are not readily apparent. Needs assessments could be facilitated by better identification of information sources when those of first choice are no longer available.

There is a need to identify dominant training priorities that occur during takeovers. The purpose of this research would not be to eliminate the need for needs assessments but to give training personnel some clues about the types of training problems that have

the highest probability of occurring and to help focus needs assessments. If there are some types of training that prevail during a takeover, knowledge of these could be especially important because that is a time when resources may be short.

The most difficult needs assessment and training problem during a takeover is probably the one described in the gambler's song: "Know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, know when to run." In other words, when should trainers act, when should they react, and when should they wait? There are many variables that influence the outcomes of these decisions, including the disposition of the trainer. The large number of variables increases the difficulty of finding research answers that will generalize from one situation to another. However, the problem is important and the possibility of adding to the understanding of this issue should be enticing to researchers.

## Conclusion

The conditions for trainers that are created by takeovers are not the same in each organization and each trainer reacts differently. However, it is clear that trainers do not need to be immobilized by the change of a takeover. There can be a process of orderly planning and implementation which will be rewarded. Trainers do receive recognition from their managers for their leadership during turmoil and they have the opportunity to enhance themselves professionally and to elevate the position of training in the organization.

It should be recognized, however, that in some cases trainers do not receive recognition for what they do. Some may choose to seek better employment conditions elsewhere. Others may find their

positions eliminated and be forced to look for other positions. But, the takeover is still an opportunity to build strengths that will make a person a more effective trainer and business person.